Hughes' Contribution in Question

By Jack Anderson

What happened to the $50,000 that billionaire Howard Hughes siphoned from one of his Las Vegas gambling casinos for Hubert H. Humphrey's 1968 presidential campaign?

We published the first report of the $50,000 mystery money on August 6, 1971. Now the story is back in the headlines.

Our 1971 account quoted Hughes' handwritten instructions to the head of his Nevada empire, Robert Maheu, to "get the word to (Humphrey) on a basis of secrecy that is *really, really reliable* that we will give him immediately *full, unlimited* support for his campaign to enter the White House."

The $50,000 was supposed to have been a downpayment on that promise. But we wrote that "there's no record the $50,000 was ever received."

Maheu refused to discuss the matter with us in 1971. But now he has sworn under oath that he "borrowed" the money from the Frontier Hotel casino and delivered it to Humphrey in a briefcase in front of Los Angeles' Century Plaza Hotel.

We have obtained a copy of Humphrey's sworn interrogatory on the incident. He recalls meeting Maheu in front of the Century Plaza on July 29, 1968. As Humphrey describes the encounter, he was surrounded by staff members, Secret Service agents and well wishers.

Maheu "wanted to wish me well and to be of help," testified Humphrey. "My reply, in substance, was that I thanked him for his offer of support in my bid for the presidency..."

But Humphrey swore he had absolutely no recollection of receiving an attache case stuffed with cash from Maheu. "No attache case was delivered to me and, to the best of my knowledge, no attache case was delivered to the automobile in which I was traveling..." he asserted.

His recollection has been confirmed by the two aides, William Connell and David Gartner, whom Maheu had mentioned as possible corroborrating witnesses. Both have testified that they also have no recollection of the delivery of the mysterious briefcase.

Humphrey told us in 1971 that he had heard Maheu had contributed to his campaign but had no personal knowledge of it. In his interrogatory, Humphrey again acknowledges this possibility.

We have now reached Hughes' former environmental aide, John Meier, who was the intermediary between Hughes and Humphrey. Meier kept extensive diaries of his years with Hughes.

The diaries show that on May 9, 1968, Meier arranged for Maheu to meet Humphrey in Denver where the then-Vice President was speaking. The two Hughes aides solicited Humphrey's help to stop nuclear testing in Nevada.

Then Maheu brought up the question of a campaign contribution. Recalls Meier: "Humphrey said he did not want to talk about money, and said we would have to talk to Duane Andreas." Andreas was Humphrey's campaign treasurer.

Meier's diary shows he saw Humphrey again on June 18 in the Vice President's office in the many-chimneyed, gingerbread White House annex. On structions from Maheu, Meier again brought up the subject of a Hughes contribution.

"Look, John," he said Humphrey told him, "Hughes and the the Hughes organization make me nervous. Talk to Andreas."

Meier met with Andreas in New York City's Waldorf Astoria on Oct. 16. Andreas gave him a list of campaign organizations that could receive funds and said this was the only way a Hughes donation could be accepted.

On Oct. 25, Meier went aboard Humphrey's campaign plane at the Las Vegas airport to talk to the Vice President. "I told him I had talked to Andreas," Meier recounted. "Humphrey said, 'Great.' "

On Nov. 6, the day after the election, while the nation still awaited some final votes from the West, Meier said he received a telephone call from Humphrey's son, Bob, who was employed briefly by a Hughes company. Humphrey himself came on the line, Meier said. In response to a question from Meier, Humphrey said he had never received a contribution from Hughes.

Footnote: My associate George Clifford visited Meier in the headquarters of Hughes' Nevada operations shortly before the 1968 election. At that time, Meier told him he had been trying without success to get Hughes to contribute to Humphrey. Both Meier and Maheu are now involved in extensive litigation with Hughes.

Bankers Bilked—Only rarely are the world's bankers taken in by confidence men, but an ingenious engineer laid off by the federal government has wangled $34 apiece out of some 400 distinguished financiers.

To support his family, Robert McLarren came up with the idea of an "International Banker Association." He combed lists of world bankers and sent them invitations to become fellows of the "IBA."

The handsome invitations solemnly advise that a membership council (actually made up only of McLarren) has elected them "to membership in the grade of a fellow in the International Banker Association."

Some 400 bankers have accepted, with the largest number coming from the Philippines. Swiss bankers, known as "the gnomes of Zurich" for their secretive ways, were the most suspicious.